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SUBJECT: Tensions Growing between Helmand Governor Mangal and His Deputy

Ref: Kabul 910

¶1. (SBU) Begin Summary. Tensions are reportedly rising between Helmand's Governor Gulabuddin Mangal and his Deputy Governor Satar Marzakwal. Mangal reportedly told Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) Director Jelani Popal that Satar was responsible for the corrupt land deals in Helmand, and that Satar should be removed from his office. Satar disputes this, and instead is pointing the finger at Mangal. At the root of their growing dispute is Satar's support for President Karzai, and Mangal's concerns that he will have a minder in his office watching to see whether he works against Karzai. The tensions between the two men and the land corruption allegations may be having an impact on public perceptions, as 70-80 elders met with the Helmand Provincial Council on April 16 and voiced opposition to Governor Mangal, Deputy Governor Satar and their administration. End Summary.

#### Land Corruption Blame Game

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¶2. (SBU) Helmand's Governor Mangal left for India on April 12, after a week of meetings in Kabul with senior Afghan officials, including the Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior and the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Director to discuss security issues and additional Afghan National Army (ANA) deployments to Helmand. During Mangal's high level meetings, he reportedly redirected the blame for the recent allegations of financial and land corruption deals in Helmand away from himself and on to his Deputy Governor, Satar Marzakwal. Mangal told IDLG Director Jelani Popal that while he was out of the country on a recent trip to London, Satar and the previous local director from the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), Haji Gulam Nabi, distributed land parcels belonging to the Agriculture Department between themselves and other parties.

¶3. (SBU) Governor Mangal seems to have made his case repeatedly to Popal and has asked that the IDLG fire Satar. Reportedly, Mangal's request is under consideration by the IDLG. Satar, who is aware of the allegations, contacted the State Department officer at the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) to flatly reject these charges and instead pinned the blame on Governor Mangal himself, who he accused of being involved in the distribution of the Agriculture land parcels. Satar said he was in contact with IDLG and seems to be making his own case with them. He wants the Governor to address the accusations about the land corruption.

#### Food Zone Charges

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¶4. (SBU) In addition to the land deal allegations, the

Ministry of Counter Narcotics continues to receive reports from various Helmand residents of corruption during the Food Zone Project in Helmand. Unverified accusations -- possibly malicious -- continue to linger that Mangal, or members of his staff, sold the certified wheat seed that was intended for Gereshk, Sangin and Garmsir districts. (Note: This distribution effort was likely separate from the US-funded effort in Lashkar Gah; the UK-funded wheat distribution program was undertaken with the assistance of local elders, which could have allowed some wheat to be redirected from the local farmers. End Note). The PRT State Department officer continues to receive reports that some elements in Kabul want Mangal called in to explain this accusation.

#### Satar Situation

15. (SBU) The Deputy Governor called the PRT State Representative late Tuesday evening on April 12 and asked whether the PRT had received phone calls from the governor, the governor's brother or Nizamuddin, the governor's cousin. He was concerned that U.S. PRT officials called off their visit to a USAID-funded power sub-station, which is currently under construction, at the request of Governor Mangal. The State Representative to the PRT told him that we had received no directions from Mangal and it was the recent threat of a suicide bomber in the city and that delayed our visit. Satar seemed very skeptical and said, "He assumes something is going on in shadows."

#### Comment

KABUL 00000973 002 OF 002

16. (SBU) At the heart of the widening split between Mangal and Satar is the elections and pressure to support President Karzai. President Karzai indirectly instructed Provincial Governors to support his candidacy for re-election, but Governor Mangal is closely tied to the Afghan Nation Party and his support for Karzai can be characterized as moderate at best. PRT believes that Karzai's people approached Deputy Governor Satar for his support and Satar has agreed to lobby on the President's behalf in Helmand. Mangal is not pleased with this development and the possibility of a Karzai minder as his deputy, and may be using some or all of the recent allegations to push Satar out of Helmand.

17. (SBU) IDLG Director Popal, who arranged Mangal's series of high-level meetings in Kabul, continues to support Mangal through this latest episode and seems intent on bringing him more deeply into the Karzai fold. Popal understands Mangal retains influence in Eastern Afghanistan and he could still be useful for the Karzai re-election effort, or as a minimum could divide the support for the Afghan Nation Party. Still, the tensions between the two men and the land corruption allegations may be having an impact on public perceptions. On April 16, 70-80 elders met with the Helmand Provincial Council and voiced opposition to Governor Mangal, Deputy Governor Satar and their administration. Many of the elders have never supported Mangal, but the fact they are publicly voicing their opposition against him suggests they are aware of the weaknesses created by the allegations and the tensions between the two men.

18. (SBU) We do not pretend to have a full picture of what might or might not be going on with regard to this alleged case of corruption. We do understand, however, that Mangal has been coming under increased pressure to promote the President's re-election. It is also clear that Karzai himself would almost certainly be pleased if he found himself in a position to remove Mangal for cause. The governor's appointment, it should be recalled, came about only as a result of pressure from international stakeholders.

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